



Staff Report

File #: REPORT 19-0329, Version: 1

Honorable Mayor and Members of the Hermosa Beach City Council
Regular Meeting of May 28, 2019

**CONSIDERATION OF A LETTER OF SUPPORT
FOR H.R. 1487 - SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL
RECREATION AREA BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT STUDY ACT**
(Assistant to the City Manager Nico De Anda-Scaia)

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Approve, on behalf of the City, support for H.R. 1487, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Boundary Adjustment Study Act, introduced by Congressman Ted Lieu; and
2. Authorize the Mayor to sign a letter of support for H.R. 1487 on behalf of the City.

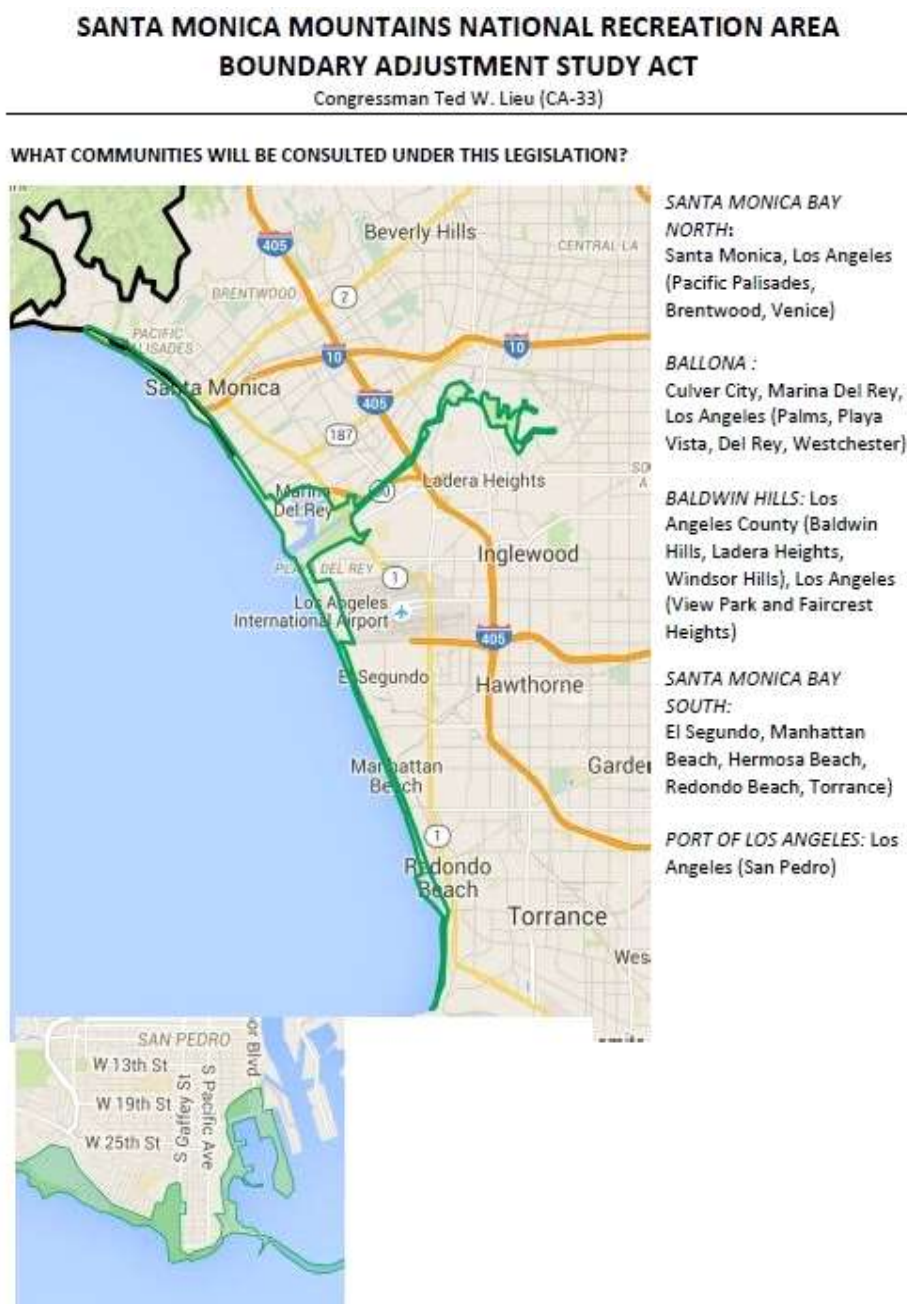
Executive Summary:

H.R. 1487, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Boundary Adjustment Study Act, would commission the National Park Service to conduct a three-year Special Resource Study, to determine whether to add the Santa Monica Bay coastline from Venice to Torrance Beach, including Hermosa Beach, and other areas to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). Staff recommends the City Council approve and authorize the Mayor to sign a letter of support for H.R. 1487. If Hermosa Beach is added to the SMMNRA, the City would be eligible for federal resources for recreational or conservation uses and be able to more easily enter into cooperative agreements for land management and improvement projects. Inclusion in the SMMNRA would not impact private property rights or create unfunded mandates for the City; however, regulation of certain activities currently permitted by the National Park Service such as filming and special events currently permitted by the City, would need to be coordinated should the SMMNRA be expanded to include Hermosa Beach.

Background:

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) (**Attachment 1** - link to nps.gov map) was established in 1978 and spans more than 150,000 acres in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties including Malibu Creek, Topanga, and Will Rogers Historic State Parks; and the coastline from Point Mugu to Venice. The SMMNRA is managed by the National Park Service in coordination with State and local agencies. In February 2016, the National Park Service transmitted the Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study (**Attachment 2**) to Congress which recommended the addition of 173,000 acres to the SMMNRA including coastline areas of Santa Monica Bay from

Venice to Torrance Beach.



In March 2019, Congressman Ted Lieu, U.S. House of Representatives, 33rd District of California, introduced H.R. 1487 (**Attachment 3**), the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Boundary Adjustment Study Act, which would commission the National Park Service to conduct a three-year Special Resource Study to determine whether to add the entire Santa Monica Bay

coastline from Venice to Torrance Beach, including Hermosa Beach, as well as the Ballona Wetlands, Ballona Creek, Baldwin Hills, and San Pedro coastline to the SMMNRA (map excerpt above). If approved, the study would be performed in consultation with public and private stakeholders including the City, analyze the concerns of private landowners, and evaluate a variety of factors including:

- Preserving and restoring beaches, coastal uplands, and waterways.
- Connecting, coordinating, and preserving State, county, and local government parks and other publicly-owned lands to enhance the potential for public recreation use.
- Developing and protecting historic sites, significant landscapes, districts, sites, structures, and recreation areas, including parks, picnic areas, scenic overlooks, hiking trails, bicycle trails, and equestrian trails.
- Creating open spaces for parks and recreational use along the coastline.
- Protecting wildlife populations in the designated area by preserving and restoring the Ballona Creek and Wetlands.
- Establishing connections along the trail systems in the designated areas with the aim of creating or maintaining single contiguous trails along the Santa Monica Bay coastline and through Ballona Creek into the Baldwin Hills and encompassing major feeder trails connecting adjoining communities and regional transit to the trail system.
- Preserving recreational opportunities and facilitating access to open space for a variety of recreational users.
- Protecting rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, and rare or unusual plant communities and habitats.

Upon completion, the study would be transmitted to the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee and the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for review and action, up to and including adjustment of the boundaries of the SMMNRA to include Hermosa Beach.

Congressman Lieu's office notified the City that the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee would be holding a hearing on a series of public lands bills on May 22, 2019, including H.R. 1487, and requested a letter of support by May 31, 2019. Three years ago, Congressman Lieu's office requested support for a near identical bill for a SMMNRA study (H.R. 4871), presented to City Council as a City Manager miscellaneous report on April 12, 2016 (**Attachment 4**). Although the City accepted the invitation to be part of the study, the bill did not advance past the U.S. House of Representatives Federal Lands Subcommittee and the study was not performed.

Analysis:

Completion of the three-year Special Resource Study detailed in H.R. 1487 is not expected to negatively impact the City. Inclusion of the City in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area could lead to eligibility for federal scientific and infrastructure resources to enhance

conservation and recreational activities including funding for facilities and open spaces (parks, trails, restrooms, picnic areas, parking lots), improved signage, and educational opportunities covering safety, environmental and historical topics. Inclusion would also facilitate the City entering into cooperative land management and improvement project agreements such as regional connecting trails or wildlife corridors. Private property rights in Hermosa Beach are not expected to be impacted; nor are regulations regarding the City's undersea transpacific fiber optic cable agreements. Joining a National Recreation Area would also not create any unfunded mandates for local governments, with the exception of additional approvals required for new oil drilling or mining operations which should not impact Hermosa Beach.

An area of concern would be the coordination of permitting for certain activities. Currently, the National Park Service permits filming and special events in the SMMNRA, which in Hermosa Beach, are either permitted by the City or not currently allowed (e.g. weddings on the beach). The issue of who would manage permitting and land/beach use would need to be determined. However, given that there would be ample time during both the three-year study and the legislative process to adjust the boundaries of the SMMNRA, it is anticipated that the City would be able to provide further input to satisfactorily resolve this issue and comment on the overall study results. Therefore, given the potential benefits to the City for joining the SMMNRA, staff recommends that the City Council approve and authorize the Mayor to sign the letter of support for H.R. 1487 for the National Park Service to conduct the Special Resource Study.

General Plan Consistency:

This report and associated recommendation have been evaluated for their consistency with the City's General Plan. Relevant policies are listed below:

Land Use Element

6.3 Green open space network. Establish an interconnected green infrastructure network throughout Hermosa Beach that serves as a network for active transportation, recreation and scenic beauty and connects all areas of the city. In particular, connections should be made between the beach, parks, the Downtown, neighborhoods, and other destinations within the city.

13.2 Social and health needs. Support the continuation of existing and new uses that enhance the social and health needs of residents.

13.5 Improved livability. Encourage the provision of neighborhood and community amenities and design features, to meet the community desire for a very high quality, amenity-rich, livable community.

Parks + Open Space Element

1.1 Facility upgrades. Improve and update park and open space facilities on a regular basis.

4.3 Safe and efficient trail network. Develop a network of safe and efficient trails, streets, and paths that connect residents, visitors, and neighboring communities to the beach, parks, and activity centers.

5.6 Signage and infrastructure. Encourage signage, infrastructure, and utilities that do not block or detract from views of scenic vistas.

Fiscal Impact:

There would be no fiscal impact to the City as a result of the study. If the boundary area of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is extended to include Hermosa Beach, additional federal scientific and infrastructure resources may become available to maintain open space for conservation and recreational use. No impact is anticipated to the City's undersea cable agreements or ability to permit future cables. The National Park Service currently manages permits for filming, special events (weddings, birthday parties, etc.), photography and other activities in the SMMNRA. Activities which are currently permitted by the City (filming/special events) or prohibited (weddings on the beach) would need to be addressed during the SMMNRA boundary adjustment process.

Attachments:

1. Link to Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Map
2. Link to National Park Service Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study
3. H.R. 1487 - Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Boundary Adjustment Study Act
Text
4. Link to City Council 4-12-16 Meeting - City Manager Report - Item d
5. Draft Letter of Support for H.R. 1487

Respectfully Submitted by: Kevin Nagata, Management Analyst

Concur: Ken Robertson, Community Development Director

Concur: Kelly Orta, Community Resources Manager

Concur: Nico De Anda-Scaia, Assistant to the City Manager

Noted for Fiscal Impact: Viki Copeland, Finance Director

Legal Review: Mike Jenkins, City Attorney

Approved: Suja Lowenthal, City Manager